

SINGLE-PAYER, NOT-FOR-PROFIT HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. KUCINICH) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, I've listened to the health care debate, as all Members have, for the last few months. And what's very interesting about it is that in this debate, we've essentially talked past the single most effective way to reduce costs and to provide health care for all Americans, and that is to create a single-payer, universal not-for-profit health care system.

Such a system is envisioned in and provided for in H.R. 676, Medicare for All, a bill that I had the privilege of writing with JOHN CONYERS of Michigan, a bill that is supported by 85 Members of Congress, by hundreds of community organizations and labor unions, by over 14,000 physicians, and a bill which represents an idea whose time has come.

Some basic facts require discussion when we're speaking about our health care system. And that is that we spend about \$2.4 trillion on health care in America, all spending. That amounts to about 16 to 17 percent of our gross domestic product. Clearly health care is a huge item in the American economy.

If all of that money, all of that \$2.4 trillion went to care for people, every American would be covered. But today, not every American is covered. As a matter of fact, there are 50 million Americans without health insurance and another 50 million underinsured. Why is it in this country which has so much wealth in this country, which has given so much of its wealth to people at the top, we can have 50 million Americans without insurance? By and large, it's because people cannot afford private insurance.

Why not? Well, it's very simple. When you look at the fact that an individual can pay \$300 to \$600 a month or more for a premium, when you look at the fact that a family can pay \$1,000, \$2,000 a month or more for a health care premium, when you consider that a family budget cannot in any way countenance the kind of health care expenses that most families can run into, when you understand that any family can lose its middle class status with a single illness in that family, you come to understand the dilemma that we have in America.

Why isn't health care a basic right in a democratic society? Why do we have a for-profit health care system? I will tell you why. Because out of that \$2.4 trillion that is spent every year in health spending, \$1 out of \$3, or \$800 billion a year, goes to the activities of the for-profit system for corporate profits, stock options, executive salaries, advertising, marketing, the cost of paperwork; 15 to 30 percent in the private sector as compared to Medicare's 3 percent.

This is what this fight is about in Washington. This is why the insurance

industry is hovering around Washington like a flock of vultures. \$800 billion a year is at stake. And so they will do anything that they can to be part of this game so that the government can continue to subsidize insurance companies one way or another.

One out of every \$3 goes for the activities of the for-profit system. If we took that \$800 billion a year and put it into care for everyone, we'd have enough money to cover every American. Not just basic health care, with doctor of choice, but dental care, mental health care, vision care, prescription drugs, long-term care, all would be covered. Everything.

People say how is that possible? It's because we're already paying for the universal standard of care. We're just not getting it.

GET 'ER DONE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. LATOURETTE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. LATOURETTE. I thank the Speaker for the recognition and thank the minority leader for this hour.

I'm going to be joined by my good friend, Mr. NUNES, from California and Mr. MCCOTTER, who is on his way.

I want to talk tonight, Mr. Speaker—most folks in America recognize the picture to my left. It's Larry the Cable Guy. And if you watch Larry the Cable Guy, his line is get 'er done. And get 'er done is a good way to entertain somebody in a movie. I would suggest it's not such a good way to run the United States of America.

Sadly, since the beginning of this year, we have had a majority in this House and in the other body and at the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue that has taken the attitude of just get 'er done. And that can lead sadly to some unfortunate consequences.

The first get 'er done was we were told we had to have an economic stimulus package spending \$789 billion of taxpayer money by President's Day. It was very important that the President of the United States have the opportunity to sign this bill by President's Day. So the White House's message to the Congress was get 'er done. And the leadership of this House got it done.

Sadly, they were embarrassed because included—and we're going to talk a little bit later in the hour—in the bowels of that stimulus package, which, by the way, was 1,100 pages long and Members of the House got 90 minutes to read it so I doubt many people read it—so people were embarrassed because they didn't read the bill to find out that in the bill was an authorization to give the insurance company AIG, which has received more, billions and billions of dollars, from the taxpayer, bonuses totaling \$173 million.

Well, then the next get 'er done came along—and everybody knows we have a

problem with the automobile industry in this country. And rather than wrapping up their affairs and going through a bankruptcy the old fashioned American way, the message from the White House was we gotta get 'er done in 40 days. Can you imagine a 40-day bankruptcy for Chrysler, the third largest automobile manufacturer in this country and for General Motors, the largest.

And the get 'er done there has been a lot of collateral damage. We have seen plants all across the country closed; we have seen about 50,000 auto workers about to be thrown out of their jobs. We have seen parts suppliers not get paid for manufacturing and making the parts that go into the cars. And we will talk a little bit later about the car dealers. Some brainiac decided that car dealers were a problem in this country and so therefore we have had to get 'er done; we had to close about 3,000 auto dealerships in this country, and we're going to talk about that, too.

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But, again, just like the economic stimulus bill, get 'er done is not really a good way to run the country because the other collateral damage that has occurred here recently is there are about 50,000 people that didn't work for General Motors, worked for companies like Delphi, that had their health insurance through General Motors, and guess what? Nobody cared at all about what happens to their health care. So while some of the UAW members that work for General Motors and Chrysler are now secured by stock ownership in the new companies, these 50,000 workers don't have any health care.

Then we came along to what at least in my State is a pretty controversial issue, the cap-and-trade legislation. Some folks on my side called it the "cap-and-tax" legislation. And basically, when fully implemented, I believe it will drive any job that's left in the State of Ohio out of the State of Ohio.

But, again, there's a way to do things here. I've been here for 15 years, and the way legislation usually works is somebody has an idea. We talk about it. We have hearings. They bring it to the floor. Members who have other good ideas have the opportunity to amend that legislation, and then we vote on it. Well, cap-and-trade, sadly, came to the floor, and at 3 o'clock in the morning—I think we voted on the bill on a Friday, and at 3 o'clock Friday morning, in a 1,200-page bill—which, again, nobody had read. They put in 309 new pages at 3 o'clock in the morning, and then we voted on the bill later in the day. And, again, get 'er done.

But we were told we had to get it done by July 4. So the White House called up the House, said get 'er done. Leadership said to their troops, get 'er done, and they got it done. But just like in the stimulus bill, people are embarrassed, because in those 309 pages,